

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
SOUTHWESTERN POWER ADMINISTRATION

**White River Lock and Dam No. 1, 2, and 3 Hydroelectric Projects, Independence County,
Arkansas**

AGENCY: Southwestern Power Administration, Department of Energy (DOE)

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

SUMMARY: The FERC and the Southwestern Power Administration (Southwestern), as a cooperating agency, have performed an Environmental Assessment (EA) for White River Hydroelectric Project. The White River Project is a re-licensing project which includes the integration of 11.3 megawatts of new hydroelectric generation into the Southwestern Power Administration transmission system. The EA evaluated impacts associated with the generation and transmission of electrical energy. Based on the evaluation and discussion of information in the EA, Southwestern has concluded, that there will be no significant environmental impact to the following:

1. Air Quality - Restrictions: none
2. Surface Water Quality - Restrictions: none
3. Ground Water Quality - Restrictions: none
4. Wetlands - Restrictions: The four wetland crossing would be spanned by the proposed transmission line. No wetlands are associated with the proposed substation within Southwestern's transmission right-of-way. The licensees propose to use selective clearing measures in any forested wetlands, leaving the root zone and as much low growing vegetation as possible in the buffer zones to prevent erosion. Only those trees that pose a current or potential safety problem would be removed. No mechanized equipment would be allowed off the access roads. All vegetation in the affected wetland would be hand cleared. Overall, the biological productivity, habitat diversity, and flood storage capacity of the wetlands and floodplain would not be affected by the project. Plan and profile drawings for the project would be supplied to the construction supervisors before any clearing and earthwork begins. These drawings would provide locations of the structures and specific locations and requirements of any sensitive areas such as wetlands, and floodplains. Recommendations are that the implementation of these measures be made in a wetland/floodplain management license article. Unavoidable Adverse Effects are: Minimal cutting at the emergent and scrub-shrub wetlands would be required. A "Statement of Findings" is included below.

5. Floodplain Restrictions: The placement of the single pole steel structures in the 100-year floodplain would not have any adverse effect on lives, property, or any natural and beneficial values. Single pole transmission line structures that are directly drilled do not significantly impede the floodwaters and floating debris. Directly drilled poles are placed directly into the ground; poles would not be placed on any pad or support that is above the original ground elevation. Moreover, existing and at grade access roads would be used for construction and maintenance of this project. No new access roads are planned. The Independence County Office of Emergency Services (Floodplain Enforcement Officer) was contacted in association with this proposed project. This office has determined that the proposed transmission line structures would not have any impact to the floodplains. Unavoidable Adverse Effects: the proposed project would not have any negative direct, indirect, long term or short term effects on the floodplains or the associated resources.
6. Vegetation - Restrictions: none
7. Wildlife - Restrictions: none
8. Aquatic Life - Restrictions: none
9. Threatened and Endangered Species - Restrictions: none
10. Cultural Resources - Restrictions: None. Any effects on Historic Properties would be kept to a minimum by implementing the stipulations in the FERC Memorandum of Understanding. Southwestern maintenance crews will be informed not to disturb any cultural artifacts including the stone wall when in the area.
11. Recreation and Aesthetics - Restrictions: None
12. Human Health Effects - Restrictions: None
13. Transportation - Restrictions: None
14. Disposal of Waste Materials - Restrictions: None
15. Migratory Birds – Restrictions: None. However, vegetative maintenance will be performed a minimum of every three years. There will be no herbicides utilized in vegetation management.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Aviation, Environmental, Safety and Health,
Program Manager
For Information: www.swpa.gov

PUBLIC AVAILABILITY:

Copies of the EA and this FONSI are available from
Southwestern at the above address.

DETERMINATION:

The impacts to the environment and public health implicit in the above 14 items are all temporary. Based on these considerations Southwestern has concluded that there will be no significant impact to the human environment, within the meaning of NEPA, 42 U.S.C. 4321, et seq. Therefore, the

preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required, and Southwestern Power Administration is issuing this FONSI.

Issued in Tulsa, OK this 6th day of November 2002.

Michael Deihl
Administrator
Southwestern Power Administration

STATEMENT OF FINDINGS

The construction of the Alterations would have minor adverse affects on geological resources, terrestrial resources, wildlife, wetlands, cultural resources, land use and aesthetics and no affects on human health, water quality, fisheries, floodplain, or threatened and endangered species. The review did not identify any resources that would be significantly affected. We conclude that none of the resources studied would experience significant adverse effects under the proposed action or any of the action alternatives.